nature net

The NatureKenya Newsletter www.naturekenya.org February 03

RECEIVED 28 JAN 2003 NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA LIBRARY

BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

Welcome to BirdLife's Africa Division !

BirdLife Internationol's presence in Kenya will be enhanced by the move af the Africo Division of the BirdLife International Secretariat to Nairabi. (Already, Nature Kenya is BirdLife in Kenya).

The Head af the Africa Divisian, Dr Hazell Thampsan, and his team af Julius Arinaitwe, Maaike Manten, Edith Onyango, Antainette Otiena and Samuel Njoroge can be reached ot 862246/ 803225. Their new office is in the ICIPE compaund at Karasani, Nairobi. Nature Kenya welcomes the move af the Africa Office to Nairobi.

DON'T MISS!

Wind in the Trees

Saturday 22 February 03
An annual music concert in the Arboretum

Carnival of Arts

Sat 1 & Sun 2 March 03 at the National Museum, Nairobi. Entry 50/- children 20/-. Gala masquerade Fri 28 February at 6:30 p.m. For more information info@KenyaMuseumSociety.org

TALKS & VIDEOS

Ethnobiology

the science of people as custodians and shapers of biodiversity

by Pablo B. Eyzaguirre
Senior scientist, Anthropology & Sociaecanamics, Internatianal Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), Rame, Italy

Mon 10 February '03,
5:30 p.m. Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi

A talk on how culture and people's needs have shaped and added diversity ta useful plants. Examples fram sub-Saharan Africa and Asia

From Pellets to Fossils

The utility of small mammal fossil bones in the reconstruction of past environments

by Fredrick Kyalo Manthi
Thu 27 February '03,
5:15 p.m. Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi

For more information contact palaeontology@wananchi.com

Mt Kenya Eco-resource Centre

Linking tourism, community development and biodiversity information dissemination

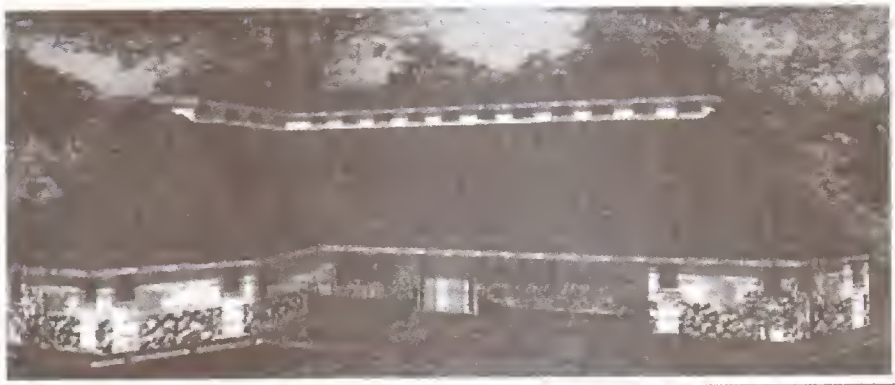
Mt. Kenya, Africa's secand highest mountain, is a World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve. It is a water catchment for the Tona and Ewaso Nyiro North rivers and plays an important socio-culturol and economic role.

Nature Kenya is setting up a resaurce centre, with the aim or providing biological, geagraphical and socio-cultural infarmatian on Mt Kenya. It will have the fallawing functians:

- Collate and computerise information on Mt Kenya's ecasystem
- Create awareness and interest omong the local communities surrounding the forest
- Enrich the existing Mt Kenya tourism packoge by providing high quality informatian
- Develop as a model for eco-resource centres

The praject is implemented in callaboratian with the Farest Department and Kenya Wildlife Service and funded by the Cammunity Management of Protected Areas Conservation (COMPACT).

For further information contact Solomon Ngari Mwangi, Conservation Programme Manager, Nature Kenya, Box 44486 GPO, 00100 NAIROBI or email office@naturekenya.org



No Wetlands - No water!

World Wetlands Day
Sunday 2 February 03

Activities at the National Museums of Kenya

Should we care about wetlands?

Everybody should care because wetlands perform **for free** important services. All that is required to maintain these services is to **look after your wetlands and use them wisely**.

Some economists believe that wetlands are the most valuable ecosystem on Earth and estimate their services to be worth more than US$ 14.9 trillion. Just consider this list of goods and services:

Wetland services we take for granted:

- water storage and purification
- flood water control
- groundwater replenishment
- nurseries far freshwater and marine fish
- shoreline stabilisation and protection against storms
- nutrient and sediment retention
- carbon storage
- support for biological diversity
- climate change mitigation
- place for recreation and tourism
- transport

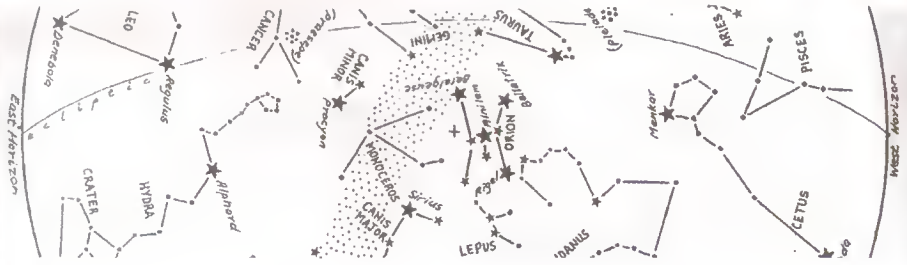
Wetland products include:

- fish, shellfish, fruits, fodder, fuelwood, medicines, timber and other building materials such as reeds and palms

The Convention on Wetlands was signed in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and is called the Ramsar Convention

Ramsar sites are those included in the List of Wetlands of International Importance maintained by the Ramsar Convention. In July 2002 there were 1,179 Ramsar sites in 133 countries, covering 102,126,760 hectares.

Ramsar sites in Kenya are Lakes Naivasha, Bogoria & Nakuru



EVENING SKY

February Sky, from The Safari Star Guide by Alex and Joy MacKay

By Fleur Ng'weno with information from www.skypub.com

Comet

Comet Kudo-Fujikawa may be visible in the evening sky in February 2003! Look for this new comet in early February. Scan the western sky early in the evening, as soon as it is quite dark. A comet looks like a fuzzy, blurry star. Although it is moving rapidly, to us on Earth it seems to stand still in the sky.

Comets are part of our solar system; they are balls of dust and ice that travel in long orbits around the sun. When a comet passes near the sun, some of the ice and dust may farm a 'tail' streaming away fram the sun.

For more information on the comet in February you can also check out the website www.skypub.com

Planets, February 03

The bright planets have been particularly brilliant the last few months, and will be easy to see on clear February nights. Planets, including the Earth, travel in orbits around the sun. They reflect the sun's light with a steady glow (unlike the sparkle of the stars) and seem to wander among the stars. The names of the planets in English are from ancient Roman mythology.

At **dawn**, the planet Venus is a brilliant light high in the east. Look for it above the sunrise. Using landmarks such as trees to guide you, you can even see Venus once the sun has risen. The planet Mars is also visible before dawn this month. It is reddish-gold in colour and higher in the sky than Venus.

In the **evening**, the planets Saturn and Jupiter are particularly bright. Saturn is brighter than it has been for years, because it is passing close to the Earth. Also, Saturn is circled by a series of rings; and at the moment they are tilted to the side, making the planet seem even larger and brighter.

Look in the eastern sky, to the left (north) of the constellation ORION, to see bright Saturn. Jupiter, an even brighter golden light, is lower in the eastern sky, rising after sunset. With binoculars, you may be able to see some of the moons around Jupiter.

Stars, February

The two brightest stars that we can see at night are also in the sky this month. Sirius, the brightest star, is to the right (south) of the constellation ORION, and a little lower in sky. It sparkles with a bright white light. Canopus, the second brightest star, is in the south, halfway between the horizon and overhead.

(To find Orion, look for three stars in a short straight line. Four bright stars make a box shape around them; and three fainter stars are at an angle to the brighter three.)

CLASSIFIEDS

Concert Announcements by Nairobi Music Society.

Sunday 2 February 3:30 p.m. All Saints Cathedral
Popular classical, jazz, and gospel music concert, with international recording pianst from USA, Larry Dalton. Admission: 200/-, students 50/-

Sunday 23 February 3:00 p.m.
All Saints Cathedral
Songs by German composers, Britten and Falla performed by soprano Una Barry and pianst Jeremy Kimber from the UK.
Admission: 200/-, students 50/-

Reach over 1000 members by advertising in Nature Net
Rates for Classifieds: • Up to 25 vords 250/- • Up to 50 words 500/- Ads • 1/4 page @ 1750/- • 1/2 page @ 3000/- with image +500/-

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

BIRD RINGING

Meet at the Museums', Nairobi Botanic Garden, at 7:00 a.m. every Thursday.

SUNDAY BIRDWATCH

Members meet at the National Museum, Nairobi car park at 9:00 a.m. the third Sunday of every month, **i.e. 16 February**. The members decide where to go. Bring lunch

TREE WALK

Guided Tree Walks in the Arboretum on the second Saturday and last Monday, i.e. **8 & 24 February from 9:30 a.m**. Meet at the Arboretum gate. *Those who are not members of FONA or Nature Kenya pay Ksh 100/- fee on arrival at the gate.*

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m. *Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Ksh 100 per birdwalk, payable on arrival at the car park.*

ARABUKO-SOKOKE (COAST)

The Saturday birdwatch with the Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association is on the first Saturday of each month i.e. **1 February, at 6:30 a.m**. from the Visitor Centre, Gede. Cost 100/- per person.

FFJ Bird Walk (Coast)

Friends of Fort Jesus birdwalks are held the third Saturday of each month i.e. **15 February, at 4:00 p.m**. Please call Marlene Reid on (011) 491 648 to confirm

Ngong Road Forest Walks (Nairobi)

The Ngong Road Forest Sanctuary Trust Nature walks are held on the first and third Saturdays of the month i.e. **1 & 15 February, at 9:00 a.m**. Meet at the stairs leading to the Restaurant at the Racecourse.

FEBRUARY DIARY

Sat 1	ASF Birdwalks & NRF walk
Sat 8	Tree Walk
Mon 10	Ethnobiology Talk
Sat 15	FFJ Birdwalk & NRF walk
Sun 16	Sunday Birdwalk
Mon 24	Tree Walk

Birdwalks every Wednesday Morning
Bird ringing every Thursday Morning

Bird Hotline
3749957

White Wagtail, *Manguo Ponds, Limuru/ Jan* Wednesday Morning Birdwalk

Brown-backed Scrub Robin (ringed), *Museum Grounds, Nairobi/ Jan* Nairobi Ringing Group

Reb-Footed Booby (ringed), *Watamu/ Dec* Colin Jockson

Greater Spotted Eagle, *Nairabi N.P./ Dec* Bernd de Bruijn, Brian Finch, Itai Shanni

Yellow-backed Weaver, *Nairobi N.P./ Dec* Brian Finch

The Bird Records Committee would like to apologise to people whose records do not appear in the bird hotline. They receive many records and therefore have to make a selection. However all records are used for analysis at the Department of Ornithology, so all records are welcome!

Tree Walks

Friends of Nairobi Arboretum (FONA) is happy to announce an extra tree walk every second Saturday of the month, effective February 2003 i.e. **Saturday 8 February 03**

This is in addition to our tree walks every last Monday of the month

Please also note that FONA has moved offices from the Girl Guides Headquarters and participants of the walks meet at the Arboretum Gate at 9:30 a.m.

Fundamental of Ornithology, A course for birders and bird guides
Elsamere Field Studies Centre, Lake Naivasha
28 April — 5 May 2003
Please find details in the Dec 02 -Jan 03 of *Nature net* or write to tba2@africaonline.co.ke

DECLARATION

Nature Kenya does not accept any responsibility whatsoever in respect of negligence of any of its staff, volunteers or members organising the outings/trips or for any loss, injury, death or damage to property.

Editor, Catherine Ngarachu

Kagu World Bird database

Kenya pilot project

BirdLife International is assessing the possibilities of creating a web-based worldwide bird database. In order to obtain ideas about what information could be expected from a worldwide input, several pilot countries have been selected to submit databases that may serve as examples. Kenya is one of these pilot countries.

Thanks to financial support from RSPB, the Bird Committee, in cooperation with Department of Ornithology, National Museums of Kenya, has been able to design a new records database. At the moment hundreds of checklists, constituting over 32,000 bird records, have been entered, and checklists will continuously be added. The database will be very useful for analysis, for example, in monitoring of bird species, unraveling seasonal aspects or compiling area checklists.

The more data the database holds, the better will be the quality of the output. **This, birdwatchers, is where your input is needed!** Please submit checklists of your visits to any area in Kenya! Your efforts will be highly appreciated and, in future, the database can be used to answer many questions you might have about birds in Kenya. Blank checklists can be obtained from the Nature Kenya office or the Department. of Ornithology.

A first analysis, from the checklists entered so far, already shows us some interesting things. The top five most commonly reported species are Common Bulbul, Speckled Mousebird, Hadada Ibis, Ring-necked Dove and Red-eyed Dove. These top five also suggests that relatively many checklists come from highland areas; indeed most are from the Nairobi atlas square. Important Bird Areas (IBAs) that hold most species per average visit are Masai Mara, Lake Baringo, Meru National Park, Nairobi National Park and Lake Nakuru National Park. Of the IBAs, Kinangop Grasslands is by far the best represented, thanks to the large number of lists submitted by Friends of Kinangop Plateau, the local Site Support Group. Great work, keep it up! Other Site Support Groups are invited to take up the challenge!

Bird Committee

NATURALISTS CORNER

Bull's Eye!

Floral patterns as directions for insects

Dino Martins
dinom@elci.org

We have all watched a bee ar butterfly arriving at a blossom. Even in the most camplex arrangements af petals and bright colours, the insect usually heads directly for the centre; where the stamens, stigma as well as nectar and pallen are located. Bees weaving across the landscape, sometimes seem ta be drawn directly out af the sky by an invisible farce, straight inta the heart of a particular flawer. Flawers af different plant species are often visited by a number af different insects and patential pollinators. Therefare, it is essential that every single visitar that a flawer receives, 'behaves' in the carrect way, sa as to better facilitate pallination.

Many flowers have develaped patterns and calaur coordinatian that paints insects in the right directian, sa ta speak. In fact, some flowers have such clear, colaur-coded instructians that the insects don't have to 'think' far themselves at all. By subtly manipulating the behaviaur of insects, flowers can ensure more efficient cross pallinatian. Bees, butterflies, flies, maths and ather pallinator insects are highly visual beings. Flawers explait the insects' senses and expectatians af colour and patterns in a number af ways. Like signpasts along a highway, flowers exhibit clear patterns that insects can easily understand.

Many af our camman East African flawers have patterns and colaur arrangements that clearly advertise directions ta visiting insects. Amangst the mast familiar and effective flaral advertisement is the 'bull's eye' arrangement. Like the concentric circles an the archer's target, flawers with a bull's eye pattern are generally circular. In addition, the target area is emphasized by a darker caloured circle within a lighter one. Familiar species af flowers with a bull's eye pattern include the delightful morning glories (Ipamoea spp.), yellow hibiscus (with the deep maroon hearts), the yellow bauhinia (maroon spat beneath anthers) and the lavely black-eyed susans (Thunbergia spp.)

A few months ago I was privileged to watch the floral bulls' eye at work. In Tsavo, rare, brief rains carpeted the graund with *Thunbergia alata*. In the biting heat, the flowers rarely last more than a few hours. During the short, preciaus caal haurs af early marning, several dozen bees are busily making their way amangst the blassams. A claser laak reveals them to be *Macrogalea candida*, ane af the commanest native bee species in the Acacia-Cammiphora bush. Each Macrogalea bee arrives flying in a weaving trail a few feet abave the ground. As soon as she 'spots' the patch of white flawers with their dark purple eyes, she is instantly seduced. Seeming to lase all will power, the Macragalea bees are hypnotically drawn directly inta the thunbergia's dark hearts. The Thunbergia flawers' bull's eye has warked.

From a bee's eye view, it is really quite simple: a landscape clearly marked with bright circles. Within each bright circle is a darker one, which signals, yau guessed it, food! The nectar and pallen rewards for follawing the bull's eye target mean that the flower sends its pallen aut inta the warld, and receives pallen fram another. With this simple pattern, the right visitor and anather rainstorm, future generatians af Thunbergia will paint the bush with their beautiful bull's eyes. So clever and yet so delightfully straightfarward, isn't it?

EVENTS

Breaking Barriers

Enhancing Communication, Education, and Public Awareness in conservation areas

Exhibition and Symposium
Monday 24 – Friday 28 February 03

Preliminary Programme at the Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi
Presentations 10:00 a.m. – noon
Exhibits open 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Monday 24

Effective education and communication is a tool for resolving conflicts in wildlife areas

Tuesday 25

Lessons in communication and influencing policies for creating public awareness

Wednesday 26

Experiences of emerging knowledge on value of wildlife to the society

Thursday 27 (4:00 – 6:00 p.m.)

Potential of invoking multi-stake holders spirit of conservation

Friday 28

Road towards people driven wildlife conservation programmes

Organised by the Steering Committee on IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) in Kenya
For further details email permaton@nbnet.co.ke or speknrb@yahoo.com

Sunbird Research - Can you help?

Joseph Oyugi, working far the Ornithology Department, National Museums of Kenya, currently a Ph.D student at the University of Illinois at Chicago in the USA, will be in Kenya far a few weeks and wauld like ta run some faraging experiments laaking at haw sunbirds use feeders at different times of the day. He wauld alsa like ta see if they chaase specific sugar cancentratians. This will be a step tawards a future study of sunbirds as pallinatars af some tree species.

If yau have feeders for sunbirds and ar happy far Oyugi ta use yaur feeders far this research, please cantact him at jayugi1@uic.edu